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AUTHOR	Ratteray, Joan Davis; Shujaa, Mwalimu
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ABSTRACT

There have been reports in the literature for several years that there are hundreds of independent neighborhood schools in existence, meeting the academic and social needs of Black, Hispanic, Latino, and Native American children who live primarily in urban areas all across this nation. They have long been an important expression of self-help especially among African-Americans. The American dilemma in education derives in part from the dispute between Americans of European descent and Americans from other racial and ethnic groups who are referred to as "minorities" even though they are a majority of the world's population. The issues governing education, therefore, are issues of cultural dominance and power. They are issues of: (1) access (whether certain categories of people should receive a serious academic education at all); (2) content: what will be taught in schools and who will establish this curriculum; and (3) context: from what socio-cultural perspective will children be taught. Independent schools were established in part so that "minority" groups could have input into these and other educational issues. These schools, which are usually preschool through eighth grade, are successful in replacing negative social behavior with positive academic achievement. Teachers design many of the teaching materials, and a majority live in the school community. The children's families often make great financial sacrifices to pay tuition, yet the schools make efforts to keep the fees moderate. Social reform is the basis on which many of these schools are founded. Genuine structural and organizational differences exist between independent schools and public schools. This report includes five figures and 15 tables which depict statistical data about independent schools operated mainly by African Americans. (VM)

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Dare to Choose

Parental Choice at Independent Neighborhood Schools

Executive Summary

Joan Davis Ratteray and Mwalimu Shujaa

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Dare to Choose

Parental Choice at Independent Neighborhood Schools

by Joan Davis Ratteray and Mwalimu Shujaa

Executive Summary

There have been reports in the literature for several years that there are hundreds of independent neighborhood schools in existence, meeting the academic and social needs of African-American, Hispanic or Latino-American, Native-American, and Asian-American children who live primarily in urban areas all across this Nation.

A survey was conducted in 1986 to learn more about these institutions and to determine why parents choose them as options for the education of their children. The following summary of the report on that survey describes the historical background of independent neighborhood schools, presents the major findings, and notes the study team's conclusions.

Historical and Social Context

Independent neighborhood schools in America have a long history, dating back to the Revolutionary War. They have been an important expression of self-help, especially among African-Americans, who at first wanted simply to gain access to mainstream education. Some who gained access, realized that the system never could meet their academic and cultural needs, withdrew and started to build their own institutions.

The American dilemma in education derives in part from an unresolved dispute between Americans of European descent, who constitute the "mainstream," and Americans from other racial and ethnic groups, who are referred to as "minorities," even though they are the majority of the world's population.

All of the issues governing education, therefore, are issues of cultural dominance and power. They are issues of:

- **access** (whether certain categories of people should receive a serious academic education at all);
- **content** (what is to be taught); and
- **context** (the perspective from which it is taught).

While these issues apply to all minority groups, we will only discuss here the experiences of Americans of African descent.

An Issue of Access

The issue of access began to take shape when "common schools" were being utilized to forge stronger bonds among European-Americans. African-Americans, on the other hand, were believed to be intellectually inferior, and their education was considered unnecessary. At this point, the national commitment to disparate treatment and dual-track Americanization became deeply embedded in education policymaking.

One of the first schools created in response to the issue of access was started by Prince Hall, a Revolutionary War veteran and founder of Freemasonry for African-Americans. In 1798, he started a school in his son's Boston home because the city refused to establish a regular school for Black children who lived in that city. In 1829, Elizabeth Lange, who had become the first superior general of a new order of African-American nuns in Baltimore, founded a school known today as St. Frances-Charles Hall Academy, where the curriculum would "meet, if not excel" that of other schools in the city. By 1860, African-Americans had built many schools and leveraged their political power to make this possible.

World War II brought increased social activism. This led African-Americans to pursue a strategy of access to mainstream education which culminated in the decision in rown v. Board of Education. Also in the post-War period, several independent neighborhood schools were founded. But in spite of all the past efforts to establish independent institutions, the majority of African-Americans seemed to be going in the opposite direction.

The pursuit of access had taken African-Americans on a headlong rush to desegregate, and many people believed they actually were going to integrate with the mainstream. The integrationists had taken control of the debate on access, but the price of their victory was very high. African-Americans began gradually surrendering their independent options in education. With no market to sustain them, large numbers of Black-owned private schools and colleges were closed.

Moreover, as scholars like W. E. B. DuBois confirmed in 1960, issues of content and context in public education were left unresolved. He predicted that by the year 2000, in spite of desegregation, African-Americans would still be deficient in understanding their history and culture.

An Issue of Content

The second issue is one of content, or what will be taught, and it arises because early leaders in American education established a system that had its roots in the northern European tradition. Founding Fathers like John Jay, writing in the Federalist papers, referred to an America

that revolved around "one united people" who were "descended from the same ancestors." These monocultural sentiments led to the temporary exclusion of other Europeans, but they were eventually welcomed into the mainstream. However, a boundary line still separated Americans whose ancestry lay outside the European tradition.

In order for the education system to maintain the preeminence of European-American culture, it was necessary to educate African-Americans so that they would accept or imitate the European-American tradition as if it were their own. African and African-American culture were considered inferior and not worth preserving or actually non-existent.

Some early schools established for Africans in America began in 1758, and the primary objective of these schools was to convert African-Americans to Christianity. By 1866, these same school began to offer a more classical and academic curriculum, but their emphasis soon shifted to providing industrial or manual training. An academic curriculum was reserved for European-Americans. In spite of this trend, the Oddfellows, a Masonic organization, reported that self-help was alive and well, for African-Americans had acquired and controlled 18 colleges, 34 academies, and 51 high schools and seminaries.

After the 1930s, schools began to shift from industrial and manual training back to an academic orientation. Just when the mainstream realized it needed more industrial training for European-Americans, African-Americans found that the rules had changed again. Thus, the dominant group has consistently utilized disparate treatment and shifting emphasis in educational goals to legitimize its own position of privilege.

In addition to changing the rules before the race had been run, European-Americans have also maintained their place in the social order by convincing the disadvantaged that their lot in life is inevitable, and therefore, they should not expect more. Researchers have found evidence of this type of fatalism among African-Americans for the past forty years. Contemporary efforts by some educators to promote a "common culture" breeds this same fatalism, for it implies that Western civilization bears God's stamp of approval and therefore should not be challenged.

An Issue of Context

The third issue is one of context or the perspective from which children will be taught. Some African-Americans, accepting the role that has been defined for them by the mainstream, have tried to stay within the limits that European-Americans have placed on the content of education. Others have felt the need to respond to the social conditions that affect their cultural group, to separate from the mainstream, and to build institutions of their own.

This is not mere social protest, for protest changes the balance of power only if the authorities concede on the subject being protested. On the other hand, institution-building is focused on the internal development of the group. It is an act of self-empowerment that builds new conditions for the stability of the group.

One of the earliest assertions of context was by Richard Allen, who was trained as a Methodist minister in 18th century Philadelphia. He found that his European-American parishoners could no longer tolerate the fact that they were being numerically overwhelmed by the African presence of their fellow churchgoers. The Europeans attempted to physically separate the Africans but keep them in the context of the European organization. Allen withdrew, founding the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1794. Because of his legacy, the AME and AME Zion churches bought or established four universities and colleges, as well as elementary and secondary schools.

Many others were later to withdraw from the mainstream, but among those who withdrew, there never has been a consensus on exactly what they should teach in their physically separate environments. Yet, the central theme of their existence is their Africanness, a cultural imperative to which each African-American must respond in some manner.

The Hon. Elijah Muhammad established, in 1932, the importance of context in education. He had no faith in the ability of public schools to properly educate African-Americans. He relied on the teachings of Islam to shape both the context and content of education.

Dissatisfaction with the results obtained from public education was also expressed by educators like Carter G. Woodson. He believed that the public system could not be radically changed to do a better job of preparing African-Americans and recommended the development of a new system. Woodson's challenge seemed to go unheeded by most educators.

One historian, Lerone Bennett, placed on the shoulders of African-American educators themselves the responsibility for change. He urged them to develop "a new grammar which transcends the inherent limitations of white categories."

There was also a movement for "community control" of public education in the 1960s, but this was aborted by public school officials. Several conferences resulted from the movement, one of which led to the formation of the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI). This organization today emphasizes quality academic preparation within an Afrocentric cultural and historical context.

The majority of Americans now go to great lengths to defend a system of public education, especially in inner cities, that continually graduate African-Americans with low perceptions of themselves, with inadequate academic skills, and unprepared to survive, either as employees or entrepreneurs, in a free-market economy.

In fact, most European-Americans, joined by many African-Americans, assume that the *only* place where America can help the masses of African-American youth is within the sanctioned structure of government schools.

The present study found evidence of Africanness among families and administrators, even those who do not classify their schools as following a "Pan African" curriculum. Some have responded to the theme of Africanness by embracing it wholeheartedly, feeling a need to return deep into their roots. Others have approached it with ambivalence, while some have rejected it completely.

While the debate over access has come full circle, the debate over content and context is still evolving, in counterpoint and on a separate track. Many African-Americans must now decide how far they are prepared to go in order to achieve "a good education."

Major Findings

In this study, we asked school administrators to describe their institutions, and we asked familes why they chose independent neighborhood schools for their children.

Summary Description of Schools

The independent neighborhood schools in this study serve African-American, Hispanic or Latino American, Native-American, and Asian-American children who live primarily in urban areas. Many of the schools were started in the early 1970s, others early in this century, while some are over 100 years old.

They are five-day academic institutions, usually from preschool through eighth grade, but there are some secondary schools. Their average enrollment is between 48 and 110 students, although some have more than 1,000.

Courses at these schools include mathematics and science instruction at early grade levels. In addition to literature and foreign language courses, reading and writing skills are emphasized. Academic performance is measured periodically by nationally-recognized standardized tests. Some graduates continue their education in private schools, and others go to specialized or selective public high schools.

Many independent neighborhood schools do accept children labelled by government schools as "underachieving," and they are successful in replacing negative social behavior with positive academic achievement. Administrators cite examples of students who come to their schools

several grades behind where they are expected to be but who soon surpass their public school counterparts by several years.

A majority of the teachers live in the community they serve. Some have returned to their alma mater to teach, while others are retired public school teachers who feel that they now are in an atmosphere where they can finally teach and where children can learn.

An important characteristic of independent neighborhood schools is their organizational and fiscal autonomy. They rely almost exclusively on tuition and, if religiously affiliated, on modest amounts of church support. More than 80 percent of the schools surveyed indicated that they receive no money from government sources, foundations, or corporations. They are the product of families who are prepared to make great financial sacrifices in order to exercise educational choices.

Analysis of School Characteristics

RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR APPROACHES. Approximately one-half of the schools in the survey are religious and one-half secular (Figure 1). The religious schools are usually affiliated with a congregation that is itself independent of control by any larger organization. Only half of them, however, report that they emphasize specific religious beliefs in their curriculum. Secular schools, on the other hand, tend to be owned by families or community organizations, or they receive substantial support from their own businesses.

CONCENTRATION IN URBAN AREAS. The largest concentrations of schools in our sample (38 percent) are in the urban areas of the Northeast, but schools were also found in Chicago, the San Francisco-Oakland area, Los Angeles, Houston, Atlanta, Miami and the Virgin Islands.

RACIAL, ETHNIC & CULTURAL HOMOGENEITY. Over two-thirds of the schools surveyed indicated that their enrollment was more than 81 percent African-American. Half of the administrators also said that their school was designed specifically to address the needs of a particular racial, ethnic or cultural group. The curricula in approximately 54 percent of the secular schools and 37 percent of the religious schools stress a cultural emphasis that specifically affirms the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of their students (Figure 2).

In designing their curricula, most schools rely on teacher-designed materials because commercially-produced materials inadequately represented their cultural group. While more than 85 percent of the schools observed U.S. national holidays, quite a few also included observances that are of particular interest to their cultural or religious group. They want children to be able to view the world by standing within their own cultural contexts.

RESPONSIVENESS TO SOCIAL CONDITIONS. The schools surveyed have a long history and are distinguished from other types of schools. They were founded by people who are committed to social change and who have established unique institutions that respond to social challenges. The schools bring academic excellence into their communities and teach children self-discipline. They utilize limited resources, yet remain affordable to most families.

A large number of schools began in the post World War II era, when African-Americans were engaging in major protests against social inequality. Of the 75 schools surveyed, 89.3 percent began in this period, and nearly nine out of ten from opened their doors between 1964 and 1984 (Table 1). These schools are not merely protests. They are efforts to build institutions within the African-American community for self-empowerment.

Both religious and secular schools appeal to a sense of mission, evoking hard work and personal sacrifice from the people who are involved. The commitment of their founders can be seen in their own words:

RESPONDENT: I thought about...what contribution can we make to the world, to Black people...now that we have struggled to go to college.

RESPONDENT (who has a degree in mathematics): [T]here was an opening. I did not want it because I have a full-time job. But I said okay, I would help out until they get someone...to replace the teacher, and I ended up staying because I love it.

Evidence that they are meeting community needs is reflected in their waiting lists. While both secular and religious schools have lists, 76 percent of the applicants are waiting to get into religious schools (Table 2).

Another way in which independent neighborhood schools respond to the needs of their supporting communities is by maintaining moderate tuition levels. The average annual tuition is $1,783 for the first pupil from a family, with lower rates for each additional child (Table 3). Many of them also have a sliding scale, so that families who earn less pay less. It should also be noted that while tuition at independent neighborhood schools is much less than at the more traditional elite private schools, it is often higher than tuition at parochial schools.

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS. The schools usually are small in size (Table 4). They have caring teachers in small classrooms, draw heavily on families in their immediate neighborhoods, and often maintain the atmosphere of an extended family. They average 110 students per school at the secondary level and 48 at the elementary level, with a pupil-to-teacher ratio of 14.6 to 1.

OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY. Independent neighborhood schools are not only independent of ownership and management by larger organizations, but they are financially independent as well, relying heavily on tution for support (Table 5).

Religious schools get 62.7 percent of their income from tuition and 17.3 percent from their church. Secular schools get 79.1 percent from tuition. They both report extremely low levels of support from government, foundations, community organizations, or corporations.

Summary Description of Families

The 75 independent neighborhood schools in our sample enroll approximately 12,000 young people, most of whom are African-Americans from families of four to five members.

Families from a broad cross-section of economic groups attend these schools, although most earn less than $30,000. For some, the cost of tuition seems to be less important than the need to pursue academic studies and to obtain an individualized learning experience for the children enrolled.

Most of the families live less than three miles away from their school, although some with higher incomes and some earning less than $15,000 are prepared to drive up to 21 miles daily so that their children can attend these schools.

When the occupations of parents are classified according to the level of academic preparation required for those occupations, parents at religious schools tend to have less formal academic training than parents at secular schools, but their income levels are comparable. It should be noted that more of the mothers, in either religious or secular schools, have earned a four-year degree than fathers in those institutions.

The process of choosing an independent school usually occurs in three stages. Families first make the determination that they must either take their children out of public school or not put them there initially. Then they look around for what they consider "a good school." When they find an independent neighborhood school that meets those characteristics, they select that school. After they have had some experience with the academic and social achievements of their children in the new environment, these families usually decide to keep their children there.

The most frequently cited reasons for choosing a school involve the nature of the learning environment in an independent school, compared to a public school. The second reason is usually the quality of the academic program. Less frequent, although still important, are reasons relating to affirming the child's cultural background, or the religious teachings and affiliation of religious schools, and the low cost of tuition.

Analysis of Family Characteristics

RACIAL & ETHNIC COMPOSITION. African-Americans constitute 87 percent of the families enrolled in the independent neighborhood schools in our sample.

FAMILY SIZE, INCOME & ENROLLMENT. Most of the families have four to five members (53 percent), while families of two to three people are the next largest group (37 percent), as seen in Figure 3. However, children from households of 6 to 7 people, with family income less than $15,000, are nine times more likely to be found in a secular school than in a religious school (Tables 6 and 7). Families earning $50,000 or more comprise 11 percent of the enrollment at religious schools and 16 percent at secular schools. Families under $15,000 make up 22 percent in religious schools and 27 percent in secular schools.

DISTANCE FROM SCHOOL. Most of the children who attend these schools live less than three miles away. They usually come from urban families earning between $15,000 and $30,000 (Tables 8 and 9). Of the families at religious schools earning less than $15,000, 63 percent live less than three miles away, compared to 47 percent of those families at secular schools (Figure 4).

Eight percent of the families from all income groups travel over 21 miles to school, and 25 percent travel over 9 miles to school.

LEARNING ABOUT SCHOOLS. Over half the families (57 percent) learn about these schools by referral from another person or family they know (Table 10), but a larger percentage of the secular schools use the media to publicize their institutions and the achievements of their students.

Schools are most likely to promote their schools by holding a major annual event to which the public is invited (Table 11). Also important are the publication of books, pamphlets, souvenir journals, and books. Administrators report that they only occasionally make personal visits to donors.

EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION. Approximately 54 percent of the families at secular schools have a degree from a four-year university or have earned postgraduate degrees, compared to 37 percent of the families in religious schools (Table 12).

Figure 5 shows that 37 percent of the mothers responding from religious schools have completed high school, and another 18 percent have completed technical school or a two-year college. Of the mothers at secular schools, 24 percent finished high school, and another 16 percent went to technical school or a two-year college.

Half of them (59 percent of the mothers and 48 percent of the fathers) are employed in occupations requiring little academic training, such as factory workers, machine operators, students, painters, practical nurses, postal clerks, transit workers, and clerical supervisors. A small number (4 percent of the mothers and 6 percent of the fathers) had advanced academic training, working as college instructors, social workers, medical doctors, lawyers, microbiologists, psychologists, computer engineers, electrical and civil engineers, pharmacists, and economists.

Of 399 families responding, 12 mothers did not report their occupations and are presumed to be not present in the family, along with one mother reported as deceased. On the other hand, 71 fathers were not present and nine were specifically reported as deceased.

CHOOSING AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL. The factors that most frequently influenced families in choosing an independent school are learning environment and academic reasons (Table 13). Religious emphases in the curriculum at religious schools and culture-affirming reasons at secular schools are the next most important reasons. Cost, though not negiligible, is the least important.

When asked what they wanted their children to achieve once they were enrolled, families stressed academic reasons as foremost, and an understanding of their cultural background as next in importance (Table 14). At religious schools, however, religious instruction is just as important as, affirming a child's cultural background.

We found that administrators had correctly assessed their market and understood what their families wanted from these schools (Table 15).

The process of choosing an independent school usually begins when families decide to part company with public schools. In the words of some parents:

[T]he classes were all too large.

[Teachers in public schools] can't really do the job they would like to...they can't do the job because there's so much paperwork to be done...So it's the system working against them more than anything else.

[P]ublic schools...tend to...hold people back instead of letting them go...I'm experiencing that now with one of my nephews...he has no interest and he is bored, so he spends his time talking.

I think schools throughout...the United States as a whole have suffered greatly since they took prayer out of the school system.

Once families are in the market for an option in education, they begin to look for "a good school":

I came up and talked with [the director]...and when I saw how sincere she was about...educating children...I just took it from there.

[T]he science, the social studies and physical education, they'll fall in place, but that foundation of math and English, math and reading, they must have.

One of the things I'm most impressed with is the school is run like a business. They're very serious. They're very professional.

I notice at the schools where the staff is predominantly White, they just don't seem to know how to love our children for themselves.

I don't want my child to...get the subliminal message that "White" means you're superior or you have to strive to be like a person of the Caucasian race to succeed.Having experienced how their children achieve in independent neighborhood schools, families then decide to stay:

One of my friends said..."If you can't afford it, I'll help you."

In this same vein, another parent saw an independent neighborhood school as helping his child adjust to different cultural environments, while another parent appreciated what his child was learning about his own culture:

My idea of a Black school would be that my son could go through here, and then he could go to Harvard Business School...he would be able to go into any white arena and be very, very comfortable going into any Black arena.

I know when I went to school, I didn't know...any Black that did anything....I didn't know who [Dr. King] was until after he died. That's when I started doing my own research on Black people...[my son] needs that background.

In addition, religion is seen as providing a context for academic achievement:

I might have a stronger belief in religion, but I know if you have religion and don't know math and reading, you're not going to get that job. So I want him prepared.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Many families believe that when teachers in the public sector become overly concerned about institutionalizing their professions and bureaucratizing their educational systems, they become less effective as teachers. In fact, the general state of public education and the inability of educators to implement significant reforms has been a major factor in the growth of independent neighborhood schools. Families tend to lose any sense of community they may have had toward the public sector and begin to survey the available private options for educating their children.

On the other hand, it would be most unfortunate to continue making the public sector the only or the primary barometer for measuring the continuing need for or success of independent neighborhood schools. There are many positive aspects of these schools for parents, policymakers, and the public to consider, and there are also some very specific steps that administrators can take to strengthen their own institutions.

In the independent neighborhood school movement, families, teachers and administrators are close partners in education, with the flexibility to address their needs as they define them. It is a movement where institutions are directly accountable to their markets.

Another asset of these schools is their ability to combine cultural affirmation and academic pursuits. Not all families, however, appreciate this aspect. Some are aware that having strong feelings of self-identity, especially if they are grounded in an African-American perspective, is not valued by society at large. Others are ambivalent about how strongly to articulate the proper role of culture in the curriculum, for they do not wish to trade off the pursuit of academic quality for cultural affirmation. It is as if they believe that both were not possible in a culturally homogeneous environment.

Most administrators are aware that their ability to combine culture and academics is a strength that cannot be duplicated effectively by mainstream schools.

Some critics may regard the role of culture in these schools as presenting a marketing dilemma, for it would seem to be contrary to behavior sanctioned by the mainstream. But administrators can see it also as a positive development, for these schools must be recognized as being distinctly American. They have grown out of our unique social fabric, with all its economic, political, and religious influences. They are contributing to building America not as a "melting pot" but as a mosaic of distinguishable parts. They focus on developing young people to be more productive citizens, who can contribute to society with a clear vision of what they have to offer America and the world.

Low tuition is an asset to many families served by these schools, but heavy reliance on tuition makes the schools vulnerable. Any proposed tution increases cannot outstrip the ability of families to pay. For this reason, greater support by society as a whole, and by African-American communities in particular, is essential. In addition, administrators must be prepared to explore more actively foundations and local corporations as sources of income, in addition to looking for new students from some of the income groups where they may not now be recruiting.

The broad commitment of administrators and families to providing children with a "basic education" is important, but it is not enough. It will be totally inadequate as society becomes more technologically advanced.

Independent neighborhood schools also must be concerned about planning for the future, building on their own perspectives and strengths, especially in the area of curriculum design. And when institutions are outgrowing the management abilities of the original founding adminstrators, it will also be important to start paving the way for a transition to others who can lead their growing institutions and continue to develop them as a permanent part of the African-American community.

Families have a role in this future planning, too, but they must rise above the temptation to see these schools as merely short-term solutions to social conditions. Families should be prepared to analyze carefully why they may feel the need to transfer their children to more traditional elite or public-sector schools, as long as the independent neighborhood school is in fact meeting the academic and social needs of their children. Families also should be prepared to increase their fundraising activities in order to strengthen the facilities and resources at these schools.

As more families assert their freedom to develop independent institutions, their competitive presence will reinvigorate the entire educational system in America. They will produce significant changes in education policymaking trends as well. Education then can be made more meaningful to a greater number of students, and freedom will have new meaning for us all.

Figure 1

Religious & Secular Contexts for Learning

RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS (n=38)		SECULAR SCHOOLS (n=37)
Churches or other Religious Organizations	.....AFFILIATION.....	Families, Community Organizations, Businesses, etc.
Yes | No 33 5		Yes | No 37 0
Curriculum Emphasis on Religious Beliefs/Doctrines	RELIGIOUS EMPHASIS	Curriculum Emphasis on Religious Beliefs/Doctrines
Yes | No 19 19		Yes | No 0 37

Figure 2

Cultural Emphasis in the Curriculum

RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS (n=38)		SECULAR SCHOOLS (n=37)
Curriculum Emphasis on Racial, Ethnic & Cultural Issues	...CULTURAL EMPHASIS...	Curriculum Emphasis on Racial, Ethnic, & Cultural Issues
Yes | No* 14 24		Yes | No* 20 17

* These "No" categories also includes those who did not respond to the question.

Table 1

Schools by Year Founded

VALUE	FREQUENCY		
1884	1		
1904	1		
1909	2		
1912	1		
1916	1		
1922	1		
1934	1		
Subtotal		8	(11%)
1946	3		
1947	2		
1953	1		
1959	1		
1964	2		
1965	1		
1966	3		
1968	2		
1969	4		
1970	3		
1971	3		
1972	1		
1974	3		
1975	7	33	(44%)
1976	5		
1977	2		
1978	5		
1979	4		
1980	3		
1981	4		
1982	3		
1983	3		
1984	2		
Subtotal		67	(89%)
TOTAL		75	(100%)

Table 2
Waiting Lists at Schools

	RELIGIOUS	SECULAR	TOTAL SAMPLE
Schools Reporting They Have Lists:			
Yes	23	15	38 (51%)
No	14	22	36 (49%)
Total	37	37	74 (100%)

	RELIGIOUS	SECULAR	TOTAL SAMPLE
Number of Applicants on Waiting Lists	1,144 (76%)	346 (24%)	1,490 (100%)

Table 3
Average Annual Tuition

	TYPE OF SCHOOL		
	Religious (n = 34)	Secular (n = 32)	Total* (n = 66)
One Pupil	$1,490	$2,071	$1,783
Each Additional	$1,295	$1,599	$1,455

NOTE: Five of these responses were from boarding schools. Unfortunately, because they were so few and certain factors such as tuition and distance of families from school produced numbers that were so large, they tended to skew the data for the remainder of the schools.

Table 4

Average Enrollment by Grade Level

(Reported by Administrators)

	Number Respon -ding[1]	Schools Repre- sented[2]	Percent Respon -ding[3]	Avg No. of Pupils
RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS:				
Pre-Primary (n = 71)	36	21	58	58
Primary (n = 71)	36	30	83	79
Elementary (n = 70)	36	28	78	51
Middle (n = 70)	36	25	69	59
Secondary (n = 72)	36	13	36	137
SECULAR SCHOOLS:				
Pre-Primary (n = 71)	35	23	66	41
Primary (n = 71)	35	26	74	65
Elementary (n = 70)	34	23	68	45
Middle (n = 70)	34	19	56	35
Secondary (n = 72)	36	10	28	74
TOTAL SAMPLE:				
Pre-Primary (n = 71)	71	44	62	49
Primary (n = 71)	71	56	79	72
Elementary (n = 70)	70	51	73	49
Middle (n = 70)	70	44	63	48
Secondary (n = 72)	72	23	32	110

NOTE 1: Total Responses. These are the total number of schools responding to this item.

NOTE 2: Valid Responses. Some of the respondents had students at this grade level. Those who did are counted as valid responses for the purpose of determining the average.

NOTE 3: Percent Responding. Schools represented (valid responses) are shown as a percent of all schools responding to *this* item.

Table 5
Sources of Income for Schools
(Total Sample)

Sources of Income	(n = 75) Gross Level of Funding	Percent
Tuition	5,128	70.9
Churches	648	8.9
Other	462	6.4
Parent Fundraising	344	4.8
Government	274	3.8
Foundations	212	2.9
Community Organizations	98	1.3
Corporations	70	1.0
	7,236	

NOTE 1: The relatively high figure for church income reflects the support religious schools receive from their churches.

NOTE 2: The responses Question 6 of the school survey form (Appendix II) are given as percentages of total school income. The "Gross Level of Funding" is the sum of the products obtained by multiplying the net funding percentages reported by the respondents and the frequency of the responses, using the following formula:

Sum (Percent Reported x Frequency)

NOTE 3: Statements of significance are difficult to make when comparing the level of funding between types of schools. We have no prior knowledge of variations in the data within each type of school. At this point, we cannot assume equality of variance.

Table 6

Family Size and Income in Religious Schools

(Reported by Families)

	NUMBERS & PERCENTAGES OF FAMILIES				
FAMILY SIZE	Less than $15,000	$15,000-$29,000	$30,000-$49,000	$50,000 or more	ROW TOTAL
2-3 Members:					
Number	20	34	15	6	75
Percent (Row)	26.7	45.3	20.0	8.0	37.1
Percent (Column)	45.5	47.9	23.3	27.3	
4-5 Members:					
Number	22	28	43	13	106
Percent (Row)	20.8	26.4	40.6	12.3	52.5
Percent (Column)	50.0	39.4	66.2	59.1	
6-7 Members:					
Number	1	8	4	3	16
Percent (Row)	6.3	50.0	25.0	18.8	17.9
Percent (Column)	2.3	1.3	6.2	13.6	
8+ Members:					
Number	1	1	3	0	5
Percent (Row)	20.0	20.0	60.0		2.5
Percent (Column)	2.3	1.4	4.6		
COLUMN TOTAL					
Number	44	71	65	22	202
Percent	21.8	35.1	32.2	10.9	100.0

Table 7

Family Size and Income in Secular Schools

(Reported by Families)

	NUMBERS & PERCENTAGES OF FAMILIES				
FAMILY SIZE	Less than $15,000	$15,000-$29,000	$30,000-$49,000	$50,000 or more	ROW TOTAL
2-3 Members:					
Number	17	17	15	6	55
Percent (Row)	30.9	30.9	27.3	10.9	35.5
Percent (Column)	40.5	37.0	35.7	24.0	
4-5 Members:					
Number	14	19	23	18	74
Percent (Row)	18.9	25.7	31.1	24.3	47.7
Percent (Column)	33.3	41.3	54.8	72.0	
6-7 Members:					
Number	9	7	4	1	21
Percent (Row)	42.9	33.3	19.0	4.8	13.5
Percent (Column)	21.4	15.2	9.5	4.0	
8+ Members:					
Number	2	3	0	0	5
Percent (Row)	40.0	60.0			3.2
Percent (Column)	4.8	6.5			
COLUMN TOTAL:					
Number	42	46	42	25	155
Percent	27.1	29.7	7.1	16.1	100.0

Figure 3
Household Size

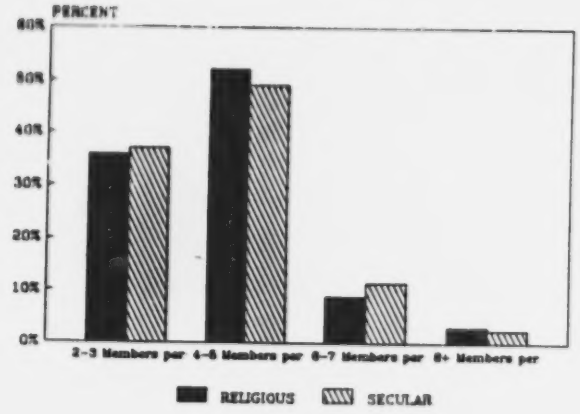


Figure 4
Distance from School
(Income less than $15,000)

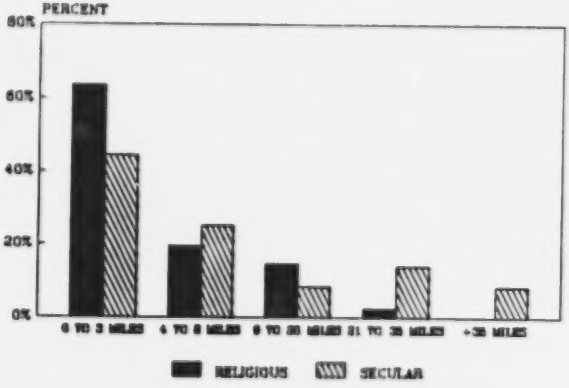


Table 8

Families at Religious Schools by Income Groups and Distance from School

	NUMBER OF FAMILIES				
MILES	Less than $15,000	$15,000-$29,000	$30,000-$49,000	$50,000 or more	ROW TOTAL
0 to 3	26	37	32	8	103
4 to 8	8	13	16	5	42
9 to 20	6	14	6	7	33
21 to 35	1	2	4	1	8
Over 35	0	0	0	0	0
COLUMN TOTAL:					
Number	41	66	58	21	186
Percent	22.0	35.5	31.2	11.3	100.0

Table 9

Families at Secular Schools by Income Groups and Distance from School

	NUMBER OF FAMILIES				
MILES	Less than $15,000	$15,000-$29,000	$30,000-$49,000	$50,000 or more	ROW TOTAL
0 to 3	16	19	23	6	64
4 to 8	9	13	8	9	39
9 to 20	3	8	6	7	24
21 to 35	5	2	2	3	12
Over 35	3	3	1	2	6
COLUMN TOTAL:					
Number	36	43	41	25	145
Percent	24.8	29.7	28.3	7.2	100.0

Table 10

How Families Learn about Independent Neighborhood Schools

	(n = 380) PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS RESPONDING		
	Religious	Secular	Total Sample
Personal Referral	59.1	54.4	57.1
Referral by Group	29.1	16.9	24.0
Media	11.8	28.7	18.9
	100%	100%	100%

Table 11

How Schools are Promoted in the Community

	(n = 73) SCHOOLS ENGAGING IN EACH ACTIVITY				
	Annually	Monthly	Occasion -ally	Quarterly	Not Done
Major Event (Public Invited Free)	25	2	13	7	25
Major Event (Paid Admission)	20		12	9	32
Publication (Own Books, Pamphlets)	13	2	13	4	40
Newsletter	2	11	9	14	33
Purchased Media Ads	13	5	16	4	31
Free Media Coverage	4	1	4	2	59
Souvenir journls/books	12		11	3	47
Personal Visits to Donors	5	2	20		46

Table 12

Family Levels of Education by Income Groups

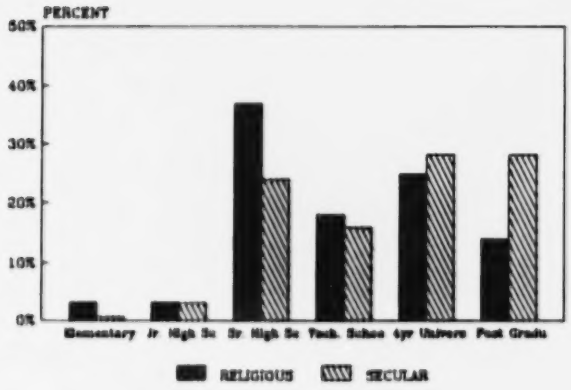
HIGHEST EDUCATION	NUMBER OF FAMILIES Less than $15,000	$15,000-$29,000	$30,000-$49,000	$50,000 or more	ROW TOTAL
RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS:					
Elementary	3	1	2		6
Junior High	4	2			6
Senior High	22	30	15	9	76
Tech Sch/Coll	5	17	14	2	38
4-Yr University	7	15	17	8	47
Post-Graduate	2	7	15	3	27
TOTAL	43	72	63	22	200
PERCENT	21.5	36.0	31.5	11.0	100%
SECULAR SCHOOLS:					
Elementary	2				2
Junior High	3	3			6
Senior High	17	11	7	4	39
Tech Sch/Coll	9	5	11		25
4-Yr University	9	18	12	6	45
Post-Graduate	3	10	12	14	39
TOTAL	43	47	42	24	156
PERCENT	27.6	30.1	26.9	15.4	100%

NOTE: Boarding schools are excluded.

Figure 5

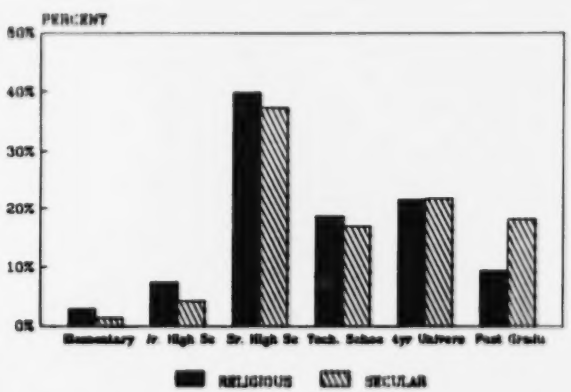
Mother's Educational Level

(Religious vs. Secular)



Father's Educational Level

(Religious vs. Secular)



NOTE: Only within-group comparisons should be made.

Table 13

Why Families Choose Independent Schools

EXPECTATIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES		
	Religious	Secular	Total Sample
Learning Environment	171	126	297
Academic Reasons	106	70	176
Religious Education	57	14	71
Culture-Affirming	5	38	43
Cost	9	14	23
TOTAL	348	262	610

NOTE: The total number of families responding is 383. The gross number of separate responses (a parent sometimes giving more than one reason) is 610.

These were responses to "open-ended" questions, and the meanings intended by the families may not be identical to those of the administrators.

Table 14

Expectations Families Have for the Achievement of Their Children

EXPECTATIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES		
	Religious	Secular	Total Sample
Academic	198	135	333
Culture Affirming	52	70	122
Religious	43	11	54
TOTAL	293	216	509

NOTE: The total number of families responding is 220. The gross number of separate responses (a parent sometimes giving more than one reason) is 376.

These were responses to "open-ended" questions, and the meanings intended by the families may not be identical to those of the administrators.

Table 15

Education Outcomes Administrators Believe Their Schools Offer

(n = 58)

	Rank	Reasons	Responses
RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS:			
		{Academic reputation	24%
	1-2	{Discipline	24%
	3	Religious reasons*	22%
SECULAR SCHOOLS:			
	1	Academic reputation	32%
	2	Cultural factors**	26%
	3	Discipline	14%
TOTAL SAMPLE:			
	1	Academic reputation	28%
	2	Discipline	20%
	3	Cultural factors	15%
	4	Religious reasons	12%

NOTES:

* "Religious reasons" include both religious content of the curriculum and religious affiliation of the school.

** "Cultural factors" include the cultural content of the curriculum and feelings of cultural kinship or solidarity.

Study Design

This study of independent neighborhood schools in the United States was conducted in four main phases, as follows:

PHASE 1: An effort was made to contact 220 institutions that had been reported in the literature. After adding new schools that were found, identifying schools that had closed, and eliminating tutorial programs, including "weekend schools" operated by Asian-Americans and African-Americans, a final list of 211 five-day schools was developed.

PHASE 2: A written survey was sent to these schools, containing 40 structured-response and four open-ended questions. Administrators from 75 schools returned their forms.

PHASE 3: A written survey was sent to families at 40 schools, randomly selected from the 75 schools participating in Phase 2, and 399 forms were received from families.

PHASE 4: Families at 10 of these schools consented to in-depth recorded interviews, probing why they chose these schools and what they expected their children to achieve by attending them. There were also recorded interviews of some administrators, teachers and students.

Limitations

Confidentiality. The schools and families were guaranteed that they would not be identified with their individual responses. Moreover, the Institute has not received permission from the schools to publish their names and addresses in any list.

Cultural Groups. Historically, most independent neighborhood schools appear to have been started by African-Americans. Although schools maintained by several cultural groups were invited to participate in this study, most of the responses that we received came from African-Americans.

Study Team and Advisory Panel

Study Team:

Dr. Joan Davis Ratteray, Project Director
President, Institute for Independent Education, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Mwalimu Shujaa, Assistant Project Director
Co-Founder, Afrikan People's Action School, Trenton, N. J., and
Member of the Executive Committee
Council of Independent Black Institutions

Advisory Panel Members:

Dr. Brigitte Berger, Professor of Sociology
Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA

Dr. John Cardwell, Evaluation Consultant
Evaxx, Inc., New York, NY

Dr. Michael Moffat, Associate Professor
Dept. of Anthropology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

Dr. Joyce Penfield, Assistant Professor
Language Ed., Graduate Sch. of Education, Rutgers University

Dr. William M. Phillips, Jr., Professor
Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University

Mr. Peter Skerry, Political Science Consultant
Washington, D.C.

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The study team and the Institute for Independent Education, Inc., also wish to express their deep gratitude to the school administrators, teachers, families, and students and others whose cooperation made this survey possible.

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